



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, December 8, 2015

Day 30

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

First Session

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Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)	Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND)
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Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)	
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)	
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**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 53    Wildrose: 22    Progressive Conservative: 9    Alberta Liberal: 1    Alberta Party: 1    Independent: 1

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, December 8, 2015

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, let us reflect. Bow your heads. Our Jewish citizens recently celebrated Hanukkah, and last week, with the lighting of the Christmas lights at the Legislature, began the celebration of Christmas, a time of peace. As we continue to celebrate, let us be reminded that the one thing we all have in common is the desire to make our province a better place for generations to come. Let each of us reflect on how we can individually and collectively achieve this goal of a greater good here in this Chamber.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Second Reading

##### Bill 6

##### Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act

Mr. Cooper moved that the motion for second reading be amended to read that Bill 6, Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate December 7: Mr. Carlier]

**The Speaker:** The hon. member of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise on Bill 6. I'm going to look at it here. I'm going to try not to break the rule of not having a prop, but I'm not sure that the amendments of Bill 6 can legitimately be considered a prop; it's something that we all have.

Mr. Speaker, six pages.

**Mr. Nixon:** Longer than the original bill.

**Mr. McIver:** It's longer than the original bill, as my colleague says. Mr. Speaker, this is not an amendment. The government has shredded, essentially, the original bill and brought forward something completely inconsistent, completely different, completely new. There's just no denying that. The only thing the government hasn't gotten around to doing is actually admitting all of that because if they did that, then they might have to say: let's actually put this thing on pause, let's go back to talk to farmers and ranchers, and let's do it right. Why wouldn't they?

You know what? I'll give the government credit. What's in the amendment is way more consistent with what their ministers have been saying, at least for the last week. Just forget for a minute what they were saying the week before; that was completely different. But in the last week the government has tried to get their act together, in fairness, and struggled, and we'll continue to taunt them about that. But, in fairness, they tried to get their act together, and they've struggled, and what's in the amendment is more consistent with what the ministers have been saying, at least for the last few days. So that's a good thing. We're late to the party – we're late to the party – but the government is trying to get its act together.

But it does really highlight how there's no possible way, Mr. Speaker, that the government can say that they've consulted with farmers and ranchers on any bill that includes this amendment. Why are we all sure about that? Because the amendment was just dropped on the world yesterday, which means the government ministers, probably somebody in their staff, wrote it on a napkin a week ago or four or five days ago, had it typed up nice, sent it to Parliamentary Counsel, and probably the government members and the speakers at best saw it three days ago. If they said five or six days ago, I would believe that. If they said a week, I wouldn't believe it, simply because that's just how it works. In fairness to the government – I'm giving them lots of credit this morning – they haven't even said lately that they have consulted with farmers and ranchers on this amendment because they couldn't have. There has just not been time. We don't blame them for that. There just hasn't been time. So it does actually blow them out of the water their argument that we've talked to people already.

The other thing that government said yesterday in their media conference – they said a lot of things, but I'm going to highlight right now from the notes that I took directly while I was sitting there listening to the two ministers. The minister of labour said that we are going to, after we pass this bill, wait 18 months to two years before we put the regulations in place. Their words, Mr. Speaker, on the record. I'm sure they won't deny them because they're good, honest people. Their words are that they're going to wait 18 to 24 months.

If they're going to take 18 to 24 months, which might be a good idea, just for the record, it does actually put to rest their concern that the previous government wasn't moving fast enough. But it also might actually indicate that the government, having dealt with this bill now, having had all the trouble they've had, having people all over Alberta angry with them – I mean, I've got well north of 3,000 e-mails in my constituency office angry about what the government is doing in Bill 6. I can only imagine how many e-mails the government ministers and the Premier have on this. It occurs to me, Mr. Speaker, again, in fairness to the government, that maybe they're starting to get it. Maybe. We'll know based on their behaviour in the next day or two, but maybe they are.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm saying to the government that if they're going to spend 18 to 24 months anyway, why not spend six to 12 of those months talking to farmers and ranchers, which is really what they're asking? Why not let them be heard? Why not talk to those farmers and ranchers, show them the bill as it would look if the amendment was passed, find out what the farmers and ranchers can teach the government about what's wrong with it, take credit for what the farmers and ranchers may give the government credit for that's good in it, come back with a bill with the full support of the farming and ranching community, high-five, shake hands, get our picture taken, and have a good bill?

There is a path to success for the government, and it fits on their timelines, Mr. Speaker. Since they've already said that they're going to spend 18 to 24 months, they could actually get it done on their own timelines, look good, force us on this side of the House to stand up and vote for the bill that they could come up with and say nice things about it and be supportive as long as they actually listen to the farmers and ranchers when they're doing this. There's a great opportunity for a great win for the government available if – if, Mr. Speaker, a big if – they will put their pride in their pocket just a little bit and say: you know, we didn't get this right. But they've got a great defence, and I'll give it to you right now. You already know what it is. It says: "But we listened to Albertans. We recognize that they are our boss. We want to do the right thing for Albertans. We want people to be safe on farms. We want people to

be safe on ranches. We want to put legislation in place that farmers and ranchers will support.”

Mr. Speaker, if farmers and ranchers have the opportunity to help build the legislation and if they're truly listened to, they will support it. The government could probably save a bunch of money after that on inspectors because you'll have a bunch of farmers and ranchers that'll be obeying the legislation because they support it. Let's face it. They're going to obey most of it if not all of it anyway because they are law-abiding citizens, but wouldn't it be nice if it wasn't painful for them to obey the law? Wouldn't it be nice if the law made sense because their input was heavily considered when the law was written? There's a big win here, folks. There's a big win available for this government and on their timeline. Again I'll go back because I just can't get past that 18 to 24 months. It was music to my ears. It means the government has time to do the right thing.

Now, the wrong thing, Mr. Speaker, would be to ram this through. You know what? I'm sure it's well intentioned. I'm not accusing anybody of anything. But the wrong thing to do would be to ram this through and then talk to farmers and ranchers and maybe find out that some of the common-sense things that you could only know by working on a farm or managing a farm or working on a ranch or managing a ranch are somehow inconsistent with what's in black and white in the amendment. Wouldn't that be a shame? Wouldn't it be a shame if the government's best intentions were unable to be fulfilled because they were too stubborn to wait to put the legislation through?

Wouldn't it be better – it really would – if the government said: “We're going to spend the 18 to 24 months before”? Because – you know what? – when you pass legislation, it becomes cement. Yes, you can come back to the Legislature and chip away the cement and change it – governments do it all the time; that's what we do here – but wouldn't it be better if we didn't have to do that? Wouldn't it be better if, before we put the legislation in cement, the people that work the farms, that work the ranches, that feed the rest of Alberta and feed the rest of the world – Mr. Speaker, Alberta farmers and ranchers produce way more food, way more livestock than Albertans can possibly eat because they are industrious, they work hard, and they're gifted because they're in Alberta, and it doesn't get any better than being in Alberta. It really doesn't. You know what? We're blessed. Alberta has been successful because we're blessed. We've also been successful because the people in Alberta are industrious, hard working, honest, entrepreneurial, excellent people. Partner that up with a government that cares and listens, and who knows how far we could go?

#### 10:10

The listening. I'm sure the government cares. I don't agree with the government a lot. I disagree with them on a lot of things, but I've never doubted that they care. I've never doubted that they want to do the right thing. It's just that sometimes they're a little stubborn. Right now they're a little stubborn, Mr. Speaker. They're a little ideological. But there's still time, and that's why I'm on my feet. I'm just trying to help them understand how instead of being the villains of a story, they could be the heroes of the story. It's a pretty simple choice, and it's pretty easy to shift gears from villain to hero just by listening and talking to the people that you care about, the farmers and ranchers, talking about them being successful, talking about them being safe, talking about their families being safe, talking about their children being safe, talking about having coverage that employees may need and want. There are so many wins available. I can't stop talking about it because it's just so huge.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to have this conversation because there's misinformation out there. I saw this morning on the news

before I came in that the leader of the Alberta Federation of Labour had a bit of a media event, and at the event the leader of the AFL laid on a desk or a table or a podium 112 pairs of gloves, representing, I believe, what the news story said were 112 people that have died in farm and ranch events. At least as far as I can tell, I'm not sure that that union leader is keeping up because if he read the amendment that was put on the table yesterday, it did some of the right things. It excluded farm and ranch families, and it excluded Hutterite colonies. So if you do all of that, then half or two-thirds of those pairs of gloves would have had to come off that desk because that wouldn't apply to the current legislation.

That doesn't mean that these changes are bad. I'm not saying that. All I'm saying is that at the media event the AFL had, they haven't kept up with what the government is doing because the 112 pairs of gloves are in no way consistent with what the legislation is that the government is trying to put on the table. It isn't. In fact – and I'm trying to be as generous as I can – it's not consistent with the numbers that the Premier has been using in the House about farm and ranch deaths over the last few days either. With the amendments – and the amendments seem to be an improvement, in fairness – the legislation is in no way consistent with the numbers that the Premier has been using in the House about farm and ranch deaths and injuries. When you consider all of that, it really might be time to take a breath and start over, Mr. Speaker.

You know what? Farmers and ranchers have had their feelings hurt, and rightly so. I hate to raise it except that it's important. The labour minister said yesterday at the news conference – and I quote based on what I wrote down, so if there's an error there, it's all mine. But I was sitting right there, so I'm pretty sure I'm right. She said: we are creating a culture of safety. Mr. Speaker, farmers and ranchers should have been really offended by that. The assumption from that silly statement – I was going to use another word, but let's go with “silly” – is that farmers and ranchers have no culture of safety now. I couldn't think of a crazier, less respectful thing for a minister of the Crown, for the government of Alberta, to say in front of a media conference and a microphone, to suggest that farmers and ranchers don't care about safety. I'm sure that probably the minister regrets it. Nonetheless, I haven't heard an apology for it yet, and I think that's overdue.

You know how that minister could apologize and kind of make it right? By saying: “We are going to take the time to talk to farmers and ranchers. We're going to take this legislation off the table. We are going to respect the hundred-plus years of history, the hundred-plus years of caring about safety, the hundred-plus years of feeding Albertans, the hundred-plus years of caring about the safety of your children by stopping and listening to you, the experts.” As bad as it is, it can be made better, Mr. Speaker. It's really quite simple how to do it.

We're at a place, you know – and, again, I'm trying to give the government as much credit as possible because they haven't done everything wrong. I think, actually, they're coming to the conclusion that the previous government didn't do everything wrong. They probably still think they did a lot of things wrong, but I think they've finally come to the conclusion that they didn't do everything wrong. So I'll try to give equal credit to the current government. They are coming around. They just haven't quite crossed the divide where they can be the hero of the story instead of the villain.

I'll tell you what. The other thing that I heard a couple of government private members say the other day was: well, if we do this, the farmers and ranchers won't remember in three and a half years. [interjections] I know. I know. It's hard to say it with a straight face, but I actually did hear that, and I'm not going to bust the members on the other side that said that because I'm a little

afraid for their future in the party that they've chosen. But, Mr. Speaker, they don't know farmers and ranchers very well. Three and a half years? I think that if they are mistreated, it will be 30 years, and they'll still remember.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Under 29(2)(a), any questions to the Member for Calgary-Hays? The Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the comments from the hon. member. He alluded to a demonstration that had occurred yesterday with regard to 112 gloves that were laid on a table. Of course, I had heard about this and had made the decision to go and see what this demonstration was about. Essentially, what they had done was that since 2009 for each fatality that had taken place in the agricultural industry, there was a set of gloves. They went a step further and broke them up into each separate year, so in 2009 they had a stack of gloves, in 2010, and so forth. I have to admit that it was a little unsettling. Of course, the other thing that the hon. member had mentioned was that, you know, based on certain criteria, maybe we could take out half of those gloves. You might be right; you might not be. I don't know. But I'd still like to know.

Mr. Speaker, even if we did take out half the gloves, there are still 60 gloves left, 60 fatalities, 60 families where their loved one did not come home. So I have trouble looking inside of myself and thinking about taking away a potential safety net and having to stand in front of those families and tell them I had a chance to fix this, that I had a chance to offer you something.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane had mentioned about a family whose wife spent six years in litigation to finally get a decision. What was the result? They destroyed a farm. Mr. Speaker, I'm just wondering if the hon. member might be willing to tell me just how many families he'd be willing to stand in front of and say: we had a chance to put in those safety nets, but we decided to wait over the next year. And based on those figures, there was an average of 18 people. Is the hon. member prepared to stand in front of up to 18 people and say, "We could have had those there, but we decided not to"?

**Mr. McIver:** I'm glad the hon. member raised this because it does really put this to a point where it belongs here. Unfortunately, he's left himself open because I would say: why haven't you acted when there's a person a day dying from fentanyl? We point that out in this House every day. Every single day.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's own party says that they're going to wait 18 to 24 months, and I agree with that as long as they listen to farmers and ranchers before they do it. Every life is important. Every farm family is important. Every injury is important. It all matters. But legislation by itself doesn't fix it.

**10:20**

Alberta's injury and death statistics are as good as other provinces', and we don't have the legislation, so there's no magic bullet here. I'm not sure. This legislation might be a good idea, particularly to listen to farmers and ranchers, even though it may not save a single life, and it may not save a single injury. There are some good elements to it if you just take the time to talk to farmers and ranchers and get it right.

I'm not even asking you to go slower than your own schedule. Your minister said: 18 to 24 months. I'm saying: use them wisely, talk to farmers, talk to ranchers, get their support, get their buy-in, and then maybe we'll all have a chance of helping them save a life or an injury. Even then there's no guarantee that we'll save a single life or an injury, but your best chance is if you talk to farmers and

ranchers, bring them onboard, get their support, have them understand it, and work with them to put in things to educate them and their kids and their families.

You can be the heroes of this story. Don't be the villains. Be the heroes, please. You've got a chance. Your own timeline is 18 to 24 months. I'm running out of time, but that's my appeal to you. We're not even asking you to slow down. We're just asking you to win instead of lose when you do this. Please win. I shouldn't be telling you that. I should say that I want you to lose so that we can get rid of you. But you know what? I love Alberta. I love farmers and ranchers. I love the three meals a day that farmers and ranchers provide for me.

This government could be the hero of the story if you'll just slow down and listen. Please do that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and speak against Bill 6. Just with regard to building a culture of safety . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, it's to the amendment that you're speaking?

**Mr. van Dijken:** Exactly.

**The Speaker:** Okay.

**Mr. van Dijken:** We need to send this to committee. We need to take the time to do it right. We need to consult with the farmers and ranchers. We need to do it right. As the hon. member before me stated, when we do legislation poorly, you put legislation into concrete, and you chip away at it and chip away at it and chip away at it to try to get it right after the fact. We need to do it right now.

How do you build a culture of safety on the farms? I'm going to allude to some of my experience with building a culture of food safety on farms. Alberta quality pork is a program that's focused on food safety. How did this program get built? Over two years of consultation with producers and with industry and with processors. Take the time to do the consultation. Get the farmers to help build the legislation, build the regulations, and then after the fact, you already have buy-in because they've had the opportunity to put their words into the process. They've had the opportunity and the respect that's due to them, being part of the industry, to actually build something that will help build the culture of food safety.

We can do the same thing here if we do it right. But if we do it wrong, there's going to be continual push-back and more push-back and more push-back. So it's time to wake up and recognize the problem that is in front of this House at this time. The government needs to start to listen and recognize that they have to get to the country and consult with the farmers and ranchers, that this legislation has the largest impact on.

Now to my notes. Mr. Speaker, Bill 6 is a bill with sweeping changes in one of Alberta's most important segments of the economy, the agricultural sector. My family and I are extremely proud and thankful to be farmers in Alberta. As recent history has shown, with protests over the closing days of November and into December, this bill has been the subject of considerable ire for many thousands of Albertans who have long and proud histories in this noble occupation of farming and agriculture. I'm proud to represent so many voices who might not otherwise be heard in the process of creating legislation intended to enhance safety for farming families and their workers, although with all the deficiencies pointed out today and to date and with the constant

changes being introduced, I would question if safety on Alberta farms is really the true intention of this bill.

As I stated yesterday in my member's statement, the Premier has chosen to introduce a bill so wide open to interpretation that no Albertan knows what her true intentions are and what will come next. Bill 6 legislation does not exist on all farms in every other jurisdiction in Canada, as the Premier would have us believe. As the minister stated on November 27, the legislation as it's put forward today gives them the flexibility to develop common-sense regulations. Essentially, Mr. Speaker, it gives them the flexibility to do whatever they want to after they get the bill passed, and that is concerning.

I'd like to share some words spoken by the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade in May 2014, when he sat in opposition.

The other issue, quite frankly, is that gender is not something that should be left to the whim of the cabinet to decide behind closed doors, without consultation and without assurance of proper consultation. I would imagine that there are several members of this House that are quite surprised to learn that these types of decisions will be made behind closed doors and through regulation, not through legislation.

While his specific comments are directed towards a separate issue, that does not make the words ring any less true for any other group that will be affected by the enactment of particular legislation. In fact, this government while in opposition had plenty to say about the importance of crafting transparent legislation out here in the open debate of the Legislature instead of behind-closed-doors-solely-with-cabinet regulations.

Albertans who work on farms are no less deserving of legislation that is properly drafted with specific input from experts from around Alberta, from the industry, whether it's oil or gas, manufacturing, the service industry, or any other, and, in this case, agriculture. These Albertans do not deserve pronouncements from on high, to have specifics sorted out through regulations when we are capable of doing so much better.

Here's another quote for you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We have heard concerns from care providers, service providers, and PDD individuals that these regulations were brought in without proper consultation. What we have done is extended the compliance deadline for another six months. We are in the process of putting together a consultation plan, which I will have more to say about fairly soon.

Thank you.

If those words sound familiar, Mr. Speaker, they should. They were spoken in question period on November 16, just three weeks ago. The hon. Human Services minister recognized that the House had failed in its duty to provide Albertans with the best law possible and was seeking additional time for proper consultation with those people with expertise in dealing with PDD individuals and their needs. As with so many issues, they certainly talked up the importance of consultation on that matter.

So I'm curious, Mr. Speaker, as to why this government is willing to risk getting it wrong on this piece of legislation. Instead, they should take the proper time and get specific industry knowledge up front so that regulations aren't necessary to define the tone and shape of the law, but the law itself can be made to do so. If we get it right, the law will be able to tell us what the true intent of the law is, not where we're continually coming after the fact, trying to explain, trying to identify what our true intent was. It just leads to a lot of miscommunication if we do not have proper legislation in place.

10:30

The MLAs from the NDP who had served their constituents in the days before May 5 of this year, so vocal in their criticisms of how legislation was introduced and pushed through without proper consultation, are now even going against their own previous actions to correct this improper practice.

The Minister of Treasury Board and Finance travelled Alberta to gather input from Albertans as to what should be part of Budget 2015, Mr. Speaker, an act that the government wasted no time promoting with great fanfare. In fact, I understand that this government is so committed to promoting their budget to Albertans that they have decided to throw a great deal of tax dollars at that project.

One of the inputs to climate change and royalty reviews is where we saw the creation of specific panels in order to give Albertans a chance to voice their opinions on these major issues. This is a major issue in the agricultural community. This is their livelihood. This is their families. This is their culture. We are playing with their culture. We cannot afford to get this wrong.

Consider that these things were things the government had campaigned on and not hidden, secretive platform planks. If it's worth consulting with the energy industry and other affected stakeholders on these issues that we knew about, how much more important it is that we should consult on this legislation, that has blindsided so many.

Of the panels created, one has reported; the other is due to release its findings by the end of December. On November 26, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour was quoted in the *Calgary Herald*, saying, "It's really important for us to hear from Albertans and we want to make sure there's enough spaces for everybody who's interested."

The speed with which Bill 6 is being pushed through this Assembly, then being enacted before the end of 2015 appears to be just another manifestation of orange being the new blue. Ideals and principles are fine until you gain political power, it seems; then do whatever you see best fits heedless and regardless of the consequences.

Mr. Speaker, not a single person will argue the importance of safe operations, not in this House and certainly not out there on family farms. That being said, with so many people standing up and stating that they have not been consulted on an issue that affects their very livelihood, their families, their communities, and their culture, it causes me great concern that full and proper advance consultation with the industry is not what is wanted in this House. The agricultural sector has been singled out and treated differently than how this government treated others before it in their short tenure as leaders of this province.

Thirteen government MLAs represent constituents who have significant interests in the agricultural community. I can scarcely believe that these thousands of concerned and vocal citizens, the ones we have all heard out in front of this building, are only present in ridings represented by opposition members. I know you are hearing the same things I am, and I only wish that these government backbenchers would show the courage to speak up for their concerned constituents. The responsibilities of the office of MLA are to represent all of your constituents, not just the ones you agree with politically.

This bill needs to go to committee so that actual industry experts, the people, the stakeholders involved can be involved in making sure these issues get dealt with correctly. This bill needs to be given the proper time for its creation and passage so that the voices of all Albertans are heard before we get into this building to do our work, not after. The alternative, passing Bill 6 prior to such input, has a



very high potential to cement in the minds of farmers and agricultural sector workers that the NDP government is every bit as paternalistic and patronizing of the people subject to the laws it enacts as the PC government they swept from power. Albertans didn't choose orange to be the new blue. Albertans made a change so that things could be done better. Please do it better. Send this bill to committee. Help to rebuild the trust in the agricultural sector in this province.

Trust, Mr. Speaker, is built out of mutual respect, and what is being voiced at this time from the agricultural community, from the farmers and the ranchers that this bill will have the most effect on, is a segment that doesn't feel like they've been heard, that they have not been respected, that their views and their opinions are not of validity here. All they're saying is to respect the people, respect the communities that they come from, respect the culture that has developed over 100 years in this province, and come and talk to them. Come and consult before legislating this type of legislation, essentially pushing it down their throats.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a)?  
St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock. You talked a little bit about the consultation work around persons with developmental disabilities and how it is that a government could take on that process and not a process similar with Bill 6. Well, the reality is that the legislation for persons with developmental disabilities was already passed. What was not done by the previous government was consultation on the regulations, and as a result the regulations do not reflect the needs of the people. I believe that's what we're trying to get to and what we're trying to do here, to get through this so we can actually have meaningful consultations with the experts that you continuously pop up and tell us about, and then we can craft regulations that work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. van Dijken:** I think what's missing here, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that we're developing legislation, and the very people that it's going to impact the most, the farmers and the ranchers, have not had that due consultation. To be quite honest with you, with this government being in power for seven months, they need to start building an environment of trust. The people in the country, the way this is being forced down their throats, are essentially feeling like this government does not respect them, and they don't trust this government to do what's right for them.

There's a lack of experience in the cabinet, there's a lack of experience in the caucus of the current government that would allow common sense to come to regulation that will be developed in the future, and I believe a lot of that common sense comes from experience in the agricultural community itself. A lot of the safety programs that are already in place were developed over years and years of consultation within the industry-specific groups, whether they're the beef operations, the dairy operations, the chicken operations, the hog operations, the grain operations. These are things that are learned over many, many years, handed down from generation to generation to generation. A lot of people don't recognize that, and these are things that our farming communities do not want to lose through this legislation, so it's really critical that we have the ability to continue to operate in a way that continues to hand those safety culture aspects down through the generations.

In order to do this properly, this government needs to regain the trust of those people in the country. They need to build respect, start

to get respect, do the proper consultation, do what is right here, be heard. The people want to be heard, and right now it's as if the people are not being heard.

I would really try to encourage this government to slow down, as we've heard from so many of the groups already through letters. The municipalities are concerned. The very industry-specific lobby groups, associations that represent industry are concerned that this is going way too fast and that they need to have more time to actually digest what is being thrown at them and to understand what implications will come from this.

I really encourage the government to take a look at bringing this and putting this before committee to get it right and then proceed. If we don't listen to the people, it's going to be very hard to get the people's buy-in after the fact.

10:40

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), questions?

**Mr. Nixon:** The member talked about trust. I'll be quick because I know he's running out of time. That's what I heard when I was back home. One of the reasons I think we need consultation is how much this government has lost trust with the people this legislation affects. One of the things that they're most upset about is that this Premier has stood inside this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, for the last couple of weeks and continued to stand up and say that she's trying to rectify a great wrong that farmers and ranchers have been doing to their employees for the last hundred years, which is an absolutely ridiculous and insulting thing to say to my neighbours and friends. I would like my good friend, who is a farmer, to comment on how that is making people feel back home.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you for the question. I think it has everything to . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great privilege to be able to rise today and speak a little bit about the referral motion on Bill 6. I don't have a lot of time. I do have some information that I would like to share, and I'll try to share as much as I possibly can.

I think that what has been said in this House has been very clear, specifically relating to consultation and making sure that Albertans feel they actually participate in this process. Today I will be dealing with several matters relating to this bill and to the referral. Specifically, I will introduce it. I will take a position on the bill, Mr. Speaker, and on why I can't support this particular bill. I will go through the specifics of the bill relating to employment standards, labour relations, occupational health and safety, and, of course, the WCB portion of the bill.

Then I will talk a little bit about jobs that are exempt from WCB legislation. You'll be surprised. There are over 170 different categories of jobs exempt from WCB legislation in Alberta, including, of course, unions, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if you're aware of it, but many unions are exempted, including the Alberta Federation of Labour. It's kind of odd that they would come forward with such a dramatic pleasure statement on this particular bill, endorsing it and thinking it's so great, when they themselves are exempt from WCB. Why they think it should be on farmers' heads I'm not quite sure. If it's good enough for farmers, why is it not good enough for them? Why, indeed, would the government take a position, especially if they themselves are exempt from that? I will of course go through that with some interest because I've gone through it a couple of times already and was surprised to see all of

the exemptions that are currently in place for WCB in Alberta. Then, of course, I will deal with the number of farms currently in NDP-held ridings and how those people feel about it.

I don't know if you're aware, Mr. Speaker, but I had the pleasure last night, speaking of referral motions, to get somewhere in the neighbourhood of over 16,000 people on a phone call last night, all from NDP ridings, all from ridings that are held by the NDP that are farmers, and I can tell you clearly that the amount of polling that was done on that particular phone call was 88 to 92 per cent relating to the questions we asked. Some of those questions were on how they felt about this bill and how they felt about consultation on this bill. To see, you know, first of all, that we would poll exclusively NDP-held ridings – NDP-held ridings, Mr. Speaker – and that we would get in the 90s, for most of the questions, against the bill, certainly I would think the government should take notice of that if nothing else.

In fact, I see the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater. I know that member and his father. I would just say to him that, clearly, people in his particular riding were contacted, and they were very excited and very negative about this bill. I would suggest that he take the opportunity along with the other 11 MLAs from the NDP side, that represent more than 11,000 Albertans, and talk to the Premier, talk to the House leader, talk to the three or four members of the NDP that actually have any experience whatsoever in this place and that had the opportunity before to legislate and to listen to their constituents and to persuade them that maybe, just maybe, they should listen to Albertans and have the opportunity to send this particular bill to committee.

The reason I say that, Mr. Speaker, is especially because the original position of the government and the Premier was that this was a great bill and that it was overdue, that this bill was absolutely necessary. They came forward with the bill, and they trumpeted how good the bill was and how wonderful it was and how great it was going to be for Alberta and Alberta's future and how Alberta and the farmers and ranchers in Alberta had been waiting for 95 or a hundred years.

Actually, Mr. Speaker, you may not know this, but my family has been farming in Alberta for over a hundred years. That's right. We have one of those homesteads down in Michichee that has actually been farming for over a hundred years. My father was a rancher, and my mother was a farmer. So I do have some understanding of it, not nearly as much as the people that actually farm and ranch today, with all the challenges they go through. As my father used to say to me when I asked him why he got out of ranching: son, if I won \$10 million, I'd ranch until it was all gone. It's a tough life. It's not that easy to work on the land, to be a farmer and rancher. To have things thrown in front of you is just not the way to do it in Alberta, especially not without proper consultations.

Mr. Speaker, if this was such a great bill when it was originally brought forward – what I find difficult is that the bill was originally five pages long. Five pages. And it was a great bill, right? The Premier said that it was a great bill. Her entire caucus said that it was a great bill. They couldn't understand why we would speak against it, why we would come to this House and stay until 1:30 in the morning. It's because, as you know, the only power that we have in this place as opposition is the power to speak. We have the power to speak, and of course the government has the power to legislate. They have the power to call the bills when they want, to speak on what bills they want, and to allocate time on what bills they want. They can decide at any time to pull this bill, and the only opportunity that we have to speak to the bill is, like now, to stand up at 10 to 11, after we were here until 1:30 in the morning, and speak to the bill and to try to slow the process down so that farmers and ranchers can have their say because they haven't had their say.

Whether it be on the Legislature steps outside here, where there were a thousand people and then 1,500 people – we've had three different rallies here. There have been rallies and protests right across the province, in every corner of the province, hundreds upon hundreds and thousands upon thousands of farmers and ranchers coming to tell people that they're not happy. Clearly, some people have said, as my reports have been, that most of these rallies were gong shows. Basically, they were come-and-be-told meetings. You come, and you're going to be told what you're going to get as far as legislation, without any ability to have input to change that.

If it was such a good bill when it originally came out with five pages but now the government has come forward with six pages of amendments – now, how can you say that it was such a good bill before if you're now bringing forward more pages of amendments than the original bill was? Mr. Speaker, they've had seven months to come up with the bill, the five pages that were so wonderful that farmers were going to bend over backwards to implement immediately because it was going to be so good for farmers and ranchers. Then they took a couple of days and came out with six pages of amendments to that wonderful bill.

Mr. Speaker, the other part about this bill that's so interesting – you know, I couldn't believe it at first, so I actually had my staff highlight it and make them different colours. I just couldn't believe that there are, I'll say, two pages to the legislative part of Bill 6, that can be changed by legislation only. That means that if they want to change those parts, which are two pages, they have to come back to this place, and they have to deal with the Wildrose caucus again, who, of course, is a strong opposition and will represent farmers and ranchers, and then we can debate it, and we can bring it back to farmers and ranchers and see how they feel about these parts of the bill, those two pages of the bill that have to go through legislative changes to be changed. They have to go through the legislative process, and again we would have more opportunity to have time to debate this bill. We'd have time to talk to farmers and ranchers and go across the province to hold more rallies and more town halls so that we can understand what ranchers and farmers want.

Mr. Speaker, the disturbing part is that when you look at the bill, there are one, two, three, four parts of the bill that are shaded in a different colour, and those four parts are regulations. Now, most Albertans don't realize this, but you can change regulations any time you want. Those people over there can do it without even talking to us, without doing anything related to consultation, not even letting farmers and ranchers know. That's not unlike what they're proposing in this bill. Believe it or not, they're going to make this bill active as law on January 1 but have no regulations, so farmers don't even know what's going on. We're sitting across here, just a few feet away from them, and we still don't know what's going on. We still don't know the specifics of the amendments or how they're planning on going forward with regulation, yet in the bill they've put four pages of regulations that can be changed any time they want without any notice to Albertans whatsoever. Any time. You know, that is not democracy. That's not the rule of law. That's not making sure that Albertans get the opportunity to speak their mind.

**10:50**

Now, we have over 40,000 family farms in Alberta. They're spread all over Alberta. I think there are 43,000 family farms. Now this bill is going to change their lives. For multigenerational farms it's going to change their entire culture, how they believe that they should do things. The thing that I want to bring to the attention of the government is that those 43,000 family farms probably represent over 200,000 Albertans, voting-age Albertans. Yes. That's right: 200,000 voting-age Albertans that are very upset right

now. I want this government to have an opportunity to go again in another election and actually not be devastated, because that's what I see, clearly, is going to happen. They're ignoring farms. They're ignoring farmers and ranchers. I've heard from a number of people in Edmonton and Calgary, in Fort McMurray, in many communities right across this province that they're attached to the farm. Their uncle or their grandfather or maybe just a friend has a farm, and they have fond memories of going to the farm and milking a cow or tossing bales. I remember, Mr. Speaker, because I did it. I remember working on a farm very hard, long hours. It's not an easy thing to do, to have that kind of constant, necessary attention.

Now, I did have a speech, Mr. Speaker, but I don't think I need it today because I'm pretty passionate about this. I'm concerned. You know, in grade 10 I remember going to Vilna, Alberta, just outside of Smoky Lake, having a good friend there with a farm and working on that farm from time to time. They had animals. I asked them a question in my 16-year-old lack of understanding. I said: "When do you go on vacation?" "Vacation? Well, there's no such thing as a vacation for farmers. You have to hire somebody to go on a vacation." Hire somebody. You have to hire somebody to go on a vacation.

**Mr. Mason:** If you have animals.

**Mr. Jean:** I hear from the House leader on the other side: if you have animals. Well, that's not the case of any farm I've ever been on. All farms need attention because farmers are the stewards of the land, not just the animals but the land. They take care of the land, and they have to be there.

When I ask a farmer about when they go on vacation, they say to me: "Well, the only people that would be capable of running my farm, of taking care of my animals, my livestock, or what I'm growing is another farmer, and it's going to take me just as long to teach them what to do on my farm as it would for me to do it myself." Of course, they would have to pay that other farmer. And who's going to take care of that other farmer's farm? That's the problem. That's why it's a cultural issue.

The government doesn't understand the cultural issue. They don't understand that these people work together at calving season or branding season or when there's harvest. They work together. They trade labour, and sometimes they pay people. They keep track of hours. They T4 those people. In fact, most farmers T4 themselves and – surprise, surprise – they T4 their spouses. Do you know why they do that? Because they're sophisticated. They know what they're doing. They get accounting advice. They get professional advice. They get advice on how best to divide their income because, Mr. Speaker, as you know because you're from a farming area, farming is not something that pays great dividends. It's not something that pays a lot of money. I don't see a lot of multibillionaire farmers out there. Sometimes there are increases and decreases in land that enable somebody to take advantage of a situation like that, but the truth is that many farmers work 12-, 14-, 18-hour days in order to do what's necessary for their farm to be viable.

I remember a time not that long ago, just 10 years ago, when farmers in Alberta were discussing how difficult it was to stay afloat. I remember in 2005, Mr. Speaker, when I was a Member of Parliament, speaking to farmers in Athabasca-Redwater. They were crying to me, this couple. They were in their 50s, and they were crying. They were talking about how they couldn't decide whether they were going to be able to go to church that Sunday because they couldn't afford the fuel because of the situation with farming in Alberta. Now, it's turned around a little bit, but it hasn't turned around that far. That's why I'm very concerned about the four pages

of regulations in this proposed act, this bill, that could be changed by them at any time whatsoever, without any consultation, without any ability for anybody to understand what's going on until OHS officers come to their farm and shut them down. There are 43,000 farmers.

They say that they've been waiting a hundred years or 95 years to get this in. Well, what's wrong with another 95 days, just a couple more months so we can have proper consultations, so we can talk to Albertans, farmers and ranchers, OH and S officers, WCB officers, people that are going to be right in this process, not just unions? I mean, I know they have an ideological agenda. They want unions to be on everything. They want unions to be on big farms, small farms, medium-size farms. They want unions everywhere, Mr. Speaker. We know that's their ideological agenda. But, truly, this is a way of life. This is something that is very important to Albertans, and we need to make sure that Albertans are properly consulted.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I did do some research last night. I sat on the Finance Committee federally in Ottawa, and referral motions are, of course, very consistent processes in Houses right across Canada, legislative Houses. This is a parliamentary democracy. Well, at least you'd think so, not necessarily in this case because democracy has gone from this place as far as this government is concerned, in my opinion. [some laughter] I hear them laughing on the other side, but there are only three or four people over there that have any experience whatsoever with any form of government except for looking from the outside in. You can laugh all you like, but I'll tell you clearly that this is not like democracy in the parliamentary democracy system.

Now, let me tell the House leader because he's twerking out, Mr. Speaker. He doesn't understand either that there are actually jobs that you get to do on the backbench. You don't just sit there and parrot what they say. You actually get an opportunity to decide things from time to time, to vote, and to represent your constituents. Yes, that's right; you have constituents. This person is not your boss here. The Premier is not your boss. As you know, our bosses are the people of Alberta, and that's why we listen to the people of Alberta. That's why we're here until 1:30 in the morning. We don't want to be here. We want to be with our families. As you know, this is a family-friendly environment, right? Not. It's not.

The truth is that this government, being ideological, knows what it's like to be in opposition, so they took away the opposition's opportunities to debate things properly. That's why we're sitting from 9 a.m. until 1:30 in the morning. That's why we will consistently do that, so they can shove through all of these things they want to and not give the opposition parties the opportunity to debate them fully so that Albertans can see what's going on. That's why Albertans right now are holding rallies right across the province.

Now, tens of thousands of people, Mr. Speaker, were on the phone call last night objecting to this bill. Tens of thousands of people have been in the rallies, not just one rally but multiple rallies right across the province. They've driven their farm equipment on highway 2. I know that farmers and ranchers have a lot better things to do than watch us in this place, yet we have record attendance on the television. Record attendance. Television, rallies, blockades as far as up and down roads: we don't want that kind of thing.

That's why we're saying to you: pay attention. Pay attention. This is about the people that you represent, folks. This is about the people of Alberta that say: "You're not doing it right. Stop. Slow down. Take a step back. Breathe and listen." Don't just tell them what to do. There's nobody on that side that actually makes a living from farming. None. Zero. That's right: none. We have farmers on this side, but I'm not even saying that they're right. I think they are,

but I'm not saying that they are. I'm saying: listen to farmers and ranchers. There are eight agricultural groups that oppose this bill, eight Alberta agricultural groups that have said: "Don't pass this bill. Step back. Consult." Eight of them.

How about communities, Mr. Speaker? They take the time to consult with communities. The Municipal Government Act: they're going to go around; they're going to take a year, apparently, to consult with communities. How many months, how many days have they consulted with farmers and ranchers? Zero. Your come-and-be-told session is not consultation. It's being told. It's dictatorship. That's not what we want to see in this place. We want to see the opportunity for citizens to partake in democracy, to have the opportunity, this referral motion, to go to committee so it can be studied.

You know, I was talking about the federal Finance Committee before. I sat on a lot of committees – a lot of committees – over a 10-year period. This one that I sat on was the Finance Committee. I couldn't believe it when I went through this, Mr. Speaker, and I saw how consultations actually happen. It talks about the federal fiscal situation and projections, and it talks about focusing on fiscal sustainability and economic growth. I'm a bit of a geek, so I read through this stuff. When you go through it, you say: well, what report is this from? Where does this come from?

**11:00**

It's 107 pages of discussion, and on the back page it's – wow – Liberal recommendations. During a Conservative government there were Liberal recommendations in this report. You know what? If you look fairly closely – you're not going to believe it – there are NDP recommendations in this report. The Conservative government under Stephen Harper even listened to the NDP, and they wrote a report after the committee met. It's hard to believe – isn't it? – that Stephen Harper has more democracy than the NDP government in Alberta, that he offered to the NDP opposition in Ottawa the opportunity to discuss, and that's because it took months to prepare this report through committees.

You know, if you look at it, under background it talks about small business and tax compliance, and it talks about changes. Section B: Changes Proposed by Witnesses Invited to Address "Focusing on Fiscal Sustainability and Economic Growth." Witnesses: changes proposed by witnesses. Section C: Changes Proposed by Witnesses Invited to Address Issues Other Than "Focusing on Fiscal Sustainability and Economic Growth." Witnesses: proposals. Now, that's just sections B and C. I haven't even gotten past section C, and already eight of the items out of 12 are about witnesses proposing changes.

Then we get to chapter 3, Helping Vulnerable Canadians. It talks about aboriginal Canadians, beneficiaries of charities, children, youth, and those other things and people that are so vulnerable that we want to make sure that we listen to them. Under section B it has: Changes Proposed by Witnesses. Unique, isn't it? So changes proposed by witnesses, witnesses that come before a committee and give testimony, experts, whether they be fiscal experts or experts on aboriginal people or farmers or ranchers. Unique, isn't it? Witnesses participating in democracy. Mr. Speaker, those witnesses, that came forward, were aboriginal peoples, charities, children's advocates, youth advocates, student advocates, organizations for disabled persons, low-income Canadians, seniors, women. Then you go to section C: Changes Proposed by Witnesses Invited to Address Issues Other Than "Helping Vulnerable Canadians." Witnesses: more testimony. Now, I'm only on page 2 of an index four pages long: Changes Proposed by Witnesses Invited to Address "Supporting Research and Innovation." That's about committees, about committees participating.

I know that nobody over there has ever seen a committee participate because they go into a committee and they do what they're told. They parrot what they're given, and they vote how they are supposed to, supposed to by the Premier, not by the people of Alberta, who elected them, because there is no accountability there, and that's why nobody is going to get elected there. So I'm saying to you here: the Wildrose opposition, who's here to help, is reaching out to you and saying, "Here's a good strategy in the next election, for the next election." Listen to the people, the people that pay your salary, the people that elected you. You know, this is not a confidence vote. The government will not fall. Rats. It's not a confidence vote, which means that the government is not going to fall, so you could actually listen to your constituents and vote how they tell you to vote, because they are your bosses. The NDP government needs you more than you need them.

Mr. Speaker, I could just go through this, but the highlights are obvious. The majority of this entire report – again, a 107-page report – is about witnesses and about changing the testimony, and the report, the 107-page report, where there are Liberal and NDP suggestions and recommendations, is about changing it for witnesses, based on witness participation.

Now, you can't tell me that you had a great bill if you've changed it already, and your changes, your amendments are more than the bill was itself. Now your bill has more pages of regulations, that you can change at whim, than it actually has legislation. Is that the government that you want? Is that the government that you want us to be if we ever get that great privilege to be over there, or do you want that government, the PCs, to do it? Is that how you want to be governed for the future of our children and grandchildren, or do you want the participation of the people of Alberta? Those people will re-elect you or not based upon how you decide on this particular bill. I firmly believe it, and not just . . .

**Mr. Westhead:** Talk to the Speaker.

**Mr. Jean:** I am talking to the Speaker.

. . . on this bill but on all bills, like Bill 8, which, of course, Mr. Speaker, we'd like to see go to committee on a referral motion just like this. That's why it's very accurate for this because, of course, we want consultation for all the bills, whether it be teachers or farmers or ranchers or businesspeople. When you campaign on a promise – I agree – you have to follow through with that if it's the right thing to do. If this is the right thing to do, then they have to complete their promise, but let's get the details right. If you want WCB, OH and S to apply, then let's get the details right. Let's listen to the people that it affects.

**An Hon. Member:** They didn't campaign on this.

**Mr. Jean:** Yes, they didn't campaign on this.

Especially, then, if you see a good piece of legislation or a good initiative, bring it back a little bit. Just lower the tempo. Let's stop the people campaigning against you, which is happening: farmers against the NDP. We don't want to see that. We want to see a good democracy. We want the opportunity to have good and fulsome debate so that we get proper bills.

We have a job to do, just like you have a job to do, and we understand that job. Our job is to make sure that you get your job right, and that's why we're here today. That's why you've had to go until 1:30 in the morning, because farmers and ranchers and Albertans hired us to make sure that you get it right if we can, but you're not even listening to us. We're right across the aisle from you, and you're not listening to us. You're not listening to the third party, the fourth or fifth parties. It's fairly shocking.

In fact, the most shocking part is that these are some of the biggest rallies we've ever seen in Alberta, the biggest ones I've ever been part of or seen. This is certainly the most letters I've ever received on any single issue, Mr. Speaker, in 11 years as a parliamentarian, through the gun registry, through a lot of different issues, a lot of issues. This is the biggest I've ever seen, the most upset I've ever seen people.

Mr. Speaker, you know that second reading, of course, is the stage where MLAs are supposed to speak to the principles and purposes of a bill, and we know that the purpose of this bill is to change the way of life of farmers and ranchers in Alberta. That's what it's doing, and we're not sure why this government is so ideologically bent on doing exactly that when farmers and ranchers have been clear that the bill wasn't right the first time. The bill is not right the second time even though the amendments are more than the original bill. So, obviously, you didn't get the bill right. Now that you've already agreed that you made a mistake, why don't we just take the tempo down, go to farmers and ranchers, send this bill to committee, and have a referral motion approved? We have a great motion here. We all like it, don't we? Don't we like the referral motion? And it took a Wildrose MLA to propose that, to send it to committee.

Let's talk about committee, Mr. Speaker. We know that the government still has the majority of members on the committee, so they can still decide to do what they want, but democracy has an opportunity to be heard. The perception of democracy is very important. The reality is more important, but certainly nobody even believes that there's a perception of democracy here because nobody is being listened to. There is no venue for these people to be heard except in their own booked events in their communities, and there are a lot of them. There are some today. It's also an opportunity to review the methods a bill uses to achieve its principles and purpose and to express an opinion on them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know it's going to be hard to believe, but I'm only on page 1. This government says that this is about farm safety. Well, if it was about farm safety, then why did they change the bill? Why are their amendments more than the original bill? Why have they now made it so that the regulations are contained inside the bill and they can change those regulations 15 minutes after they pass the bill? They can totally change the entire meaning of the bill and purpose of the bill 15 minutes after they pass the bill. What recourse do farmers and ranchers have? Zero. None. They can't even be heard. They don't get heard the first time. That's why farmers and ranchers are so upset, because you're not listening. You're not consulting. You're not giving them an opportunity to participate in something that is their way of life.

Safety is very important. I come from a culture of safety. A culture of safety, yes. In Fort McMurray safety is job number one. Syncrude, Suncor, every oil sands plant: there is nothing more important than safety. Nothing. People that aren't safe don't stay on the site. It's as simple as that.

**11:10**

I'm very proud as well that for 10 years I represented the largest percentage of union members in the country. I'm very proud of that. I got 72 per cent in the last federal election. So it's not about being antiunion. In fact, I thought one of the private unions came out with a great proposal, Mr. Speaker, as you're aware, and maybe this will come forward in the referral motion if, in fact, we get to go to committee and we can hear evidence from that particular union. That union proposed that there would be a zero increase for three years because they know that the fiscal position of this government and the fiscal position of oil now – I think it's down to \$37 per barrel this morning – are bad. So they've proposed to the managers:

“Listen, we see what's going on. We're proposing to our members no increase for the next three years.” Now, that's good management. That's a good step by a union that understands the realities of the economy.

But, Mr. Speaker, what are we getting out of these people? We're not getting the issues of safety. We're certainly not getting issues of consultation. I don't understand why they wouldn't consult at this stage given how many opportunities Albertans have had to express themselves right across the province. I've seen the pictures – and I'm sure they have, too; I hope so – although we don't get much time outside of this place because we have to be in here. We've not as many members as they have over there. Hopefully, in the next election Albertans will remember that and bring more Wildrose members back here. But the truth is that we have to rely on social media to see what's going on. We see miles and miles of convoys of agricultural machinery on roads, highways, streets, parked outside of buildings where these consultations, or come-and-be-told meetings, are happening with the government.

I might remind you, Mr. Speaker, that the Wildrose MLAs have actually had more town halls just this last weekend, I believe, than all of the government members put together over the previous two. That's because we actually believe in democracy. We believe that the people of Alberta should have the opportunity to be heard. You know what? Ironically enough, they are our bosses. They are your bosses. They should be able to decide what is in legislation that affects their life, that changes their life, that changes their culture and their belief structure.

I know that this NDP government on the other side has not been to many farms, or if they have, they obviously haven't participated very well because they don't understand that farmers and ranchers want to participate in the changes that will affect their lives. It is a way of life; it's not just a job. They don't stop work at 5 o'clock. There's no punch clock. They don't get to go home at a certain time. They don't say: oh, Mr. Calf, Betsy, don't give birth at 2 in the morning and have a problem. They don't pick that. They don't have a time clock.

Some of the questions that have been brought forward were very amusing, Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure you know because you check social media as well, as all of us do. Some of the questions brought forward by the NDP participants in these meetings were laughable at best. You can check out Facebook to see what happened there. But it shows a clear understanding that they don't have any understanding of what's going on on farms and ranches across this province. I don't know who they're listening to, but it's certainly not farmers and ranchers.

What they don't understand – I think the most important thing is that ranches and farms are very complicated places. It's not like they run one machine, then go home, go to a lube shop, and get the oil changed. They do it themselves, Mr. Speaker. Very seldom does a farmer go to a heavy-equipment mechanic and say: fix this. That's because they are a heavy-equipment mechanic, and they fix it themselves. That's because they go and get the part themselves, and they install it themselves. That's because in between lunch being called and lunch being ready, they change the oil in their son's motorcycle or in the combine or the forklift. That's because their jobs are so varied. I don't think there's any job on the planet, frankly, that is more complicated and involves more different things, whether it be heavy equipment such as backhoes, like a 320 backhoe, or a dozer, a skid-steer, all of those things.

You'll find them all on a farm as well as a combine. You find them all there, whether it's scaffolding, heavy equipment, whether it is the chemicals that are found on farms, Mr. Speaker, and not just one or two types of chemicals but chemicals to keep their livestock healthy, chemicals to make sure that their farming is as

productive as possible. Some of these chemicals are dangerous, and they do make sure that they're out of children's reach and out of reach of those people that shouldn't be playing with those chemicals.

Why are farms so safe in Alberta compared to the rest of the country on a per capita basis? Well, it's because it's their family, Mr. Speaker – there's nothing more important than keeping your family safe – and it's the reputation of their family. These family farms have been in their families for hundreds of years in some cases or at least a hundred anyway. That's a hundred years' worth of reputation. Nobody wants to see that reputation taken out in one stupid accident, and that's why they're so safe. Their kids are on that farm. That's why they want to make sure it's safe. It's their children, and nothing is more important than our children. Nobody is going to keep it safer than farmers and ranchers.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you know, my oldest brother – he is in British Columbia now – raised llamas. Llamas are quite an interesting animal. My father raised cows, and my mom's family raised sheep for a couple of generations. I was actually raised in that family. Quite an interesting background. We farmed quite a few different things. In fact, my brother also raised dogs for a trapline that we had up in northern Alberta, and he also ran a lot of dog races, so he had about 20 or 30 dogs at one time. So we've raised a lot of different animals. I'll tell you that raising a llama and making a llama work so that he doesn't spit at you or stomp on your feet or bite you is a lot different than raising a horse or a pig or sheep. That's why farmers do an incredible amount of research and talk to their neighbours and talk to their friends, to make sure that they know what they're doing with the kind of animal that they're raising, whether it might even be an elk farm.

It's a very complicated process, and there are so many different idiosyncrasies to farming. That's why I wish that, you know, when Albertans do have an opportunity, they do call the minister of agriculture at 780.786.1997. That's 780.786.1997. If you have closed caption on, that should come right across the bottom of the line right here. I have a lot of other phone numbers, but you can find them on the website. I think that the NDP did take it down earlier this week. I would encourage you to call 780.786.1997 and talk to the minister and let him know what's going on. Now, I don't know if his phone still works. I know that ours are ringing off the hook, and we're asking them to call the NDP, so I don't know how many phone calls they're getting. But call the minister of agriculture.

He did say clearly in one of the meetings that happened last week that he thought that the bill should be pulled, and he was going to talk to caucus about it. Now, the bill has not been pulled. Caucus is not talking very much. In fact, we haven't seen them stand up and actually talk about how their farmers feel about this. We've had somebody stand up and say that they have a farmer that lives in Edmonton now that is in favour of this bill. Okay. Well, how about all the farmers that are against the bill, the 95 per cent of them that are against the bill, the 95 per cent of them that think this bill should stop, at the very least? In fact, I think that that number is closer to a hundred per cent, Mr. Speaker, that think that it should be stopped or slowed down.

Even the left-leaning columnists – I have to hold myself sometimes to stop myself from falling – are some of the people that are saying: slow down; change course; listen to the people. Left-leaning columnists, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I read a story this morning where one columnist out of Calgary was saying that Bill 6 is going to dog this government forever. I think what they meant was for three and a half years because that's forever for these guys. When even the left-leaning columnists come out and say that, that should give somebody pause, like an opportunity to slow down.

Maybe, just maybe, Albertans are right. Let's say that they're right. We think that they're right. If they're right – and we've already seen you change your mind once. Mr. Speaker, this government changed its mind once. As I mentioned, there are more pages of amendments than the actual bill, just recently in two days rushed through. If they are right and if you're wrong, not once but twice, maybe, just maybe, we could get a better bill if you held off a bit. Maybe we could get a bill that farmers and ranchers would actually like.

11:20

There are some laudable parts of this bill – there are, Mr. Speaker – but some of the parts of this bill are so interfering in their lives that it actually borders on dangerous. When I say dangerous, I mean this. When you stop listening, which means at a referral motion in committee, when you stop listening to your witnesses, when you stop listening to Albertans, when you stop listening to the people that elected you and that are looking to you for hope – I think Albertans were looking for hope, and they're not finding it – that's dangerous because that's when governments lose their authority to govern. They lose it. They can keep governing, but Albertans don't listen anymore. They lose their moral authority to govern because they're not listening to the people who elected them.

Now, I've seen governments, conservative governments in the past, come forward with legislation telling Albertans what they want or telling Canadians what they want. Well, we saw what happened in 1993 to a conservative government that told them what they wanted. Governments are not here to tell people what they want, Mr. Speaker. Governments are here to listen, act, and govern according to the best wishes and needs and desires of the people that they represent.

There is no other work environment like a farm, like a ranch. None. It is very, very complicated. It doesn't matter whether it's with the machinery, with the chemicals, the relationship between other farms and other ranches, with professional organizations, agricultural organizations.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have to tell a little story. I know I don't have a lot of time left. I think I have about 40 minutes left, but that's going to go pretty quickly. I'm glad we've got a couple more amendments coming forward.

I remember when I was in Three Hills – I spent four years in Three Hills – and I would get up in the morning to go milk cows. I did work on a farm, Mr. Speaker, just like yourself and many people on this side of the House. I would get up at 5 o'clock in the morning, and I would travel about 20 minutes to Linden, just outside of Three Hills, and I'd milk cows, about 170 cows, if I remember correctly. We'd bring them in, and I'd be pretty tired but excited because I love animals and I love farms. We would milk those cows, and sometimes they had bad milk. We'd have to give the cow a shot, medicine, and we'd have to make sure we'd watch that milk carefully so we wouldn't contaminate the entire batch. We'd have to make sure it wasn't bad and that it was tested properly, and if it was bad, we'd obviously discharge it into the ground or into the sewer system so we'd only get good milk.

Now, why that is important, Mr. Speaker, is because you're trained there by farmers and ranchers, that care about the quality of the product that they put out. I would go in at 5:30 in the morning to milk those cows, spend a couple of hours milking those cows, and because you have to milk them again at night, that's a long day. Of course, OH and S might not let farmers milk in the morning and night. This new legislation might not let them do that. That's interesting. We'd sure like some more details on that, and I know farmers and ranchers would like it, too.

Then we'd go spend some time – and I know the number one or number two habit of farmers is to go make sure gophers don't exist

anymore. So at the ripe age of 14, 15 I would go shoot gophers on that farm and then come back and do other farm work, whether it would be mending fences or making sure that the animals were kept separate or behaved properly – there would be just so many things – changing the oil on a motorbike or a forklift. The jobs would change dramatically from one job to the next job, and often there would be a lot of time off in between for a young guy like me.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that I would be permitted to work in that kind of situation now unless there was a tremendous amount of legislation and regulations in place to govern my ability to or not to do that. I don't think I would be allowed under the proposed amendments by this government. In fact, I think most of the things that we did in those days – I had many friends there who are still friends of mine today – I would not be able to do.

After I had come back from farming and milking cows and doing all those wonderful things, picking rocks and shooting gophers, I would then go back to my friend's place. He had a honey farm. That's where I would stay on weekends. He had a honey farm, and I'd build frames on that honey farm, and I'd take the honey off. I would make sure that that honey, of course, was properly dealt with, hairnets and all that kind of thing. But, Mr. Speaker, under this legislation I wouldn't be able to do that either. I would not.

I learned how to do some very important things in my life during that period of time that have helped me in many, many different things. In fact, those particular lessons help me today because I understand that I am not an expert on farming and ranching. I am not, Mr. Speaker. I can promise you, from what I've seen, that there's nobody over there that's even close to being an expert.

So besides the Alberta Federation of Labour and some other unions, who are they consulting with? I know they're happy that unions are going to be all involved in big farms, small farms, medium-sized farms. They're all going to be unionized now. [laughter] That's what the bill says. It gives them the opportunity to do so. They laugh on the other side, Mr. Speaker, but the problem is that there's no certainty there. [interjections] We don't know, and they tried to give some certainty with the regulations. You know what? We had on the website, we had on handouts – I wish they would control themselves a little bit, Mr. Speaker. They're getting out of hand.

They had on the website and they had in what they passed out to the Wildrose opposition information that now they say was wrong – wrong – although they sent it to the opposition. We're not known for being the biggest cheerleaders of the NDP. The Wildrose sort of have a thing about that. We're trying to be helpful, but it's difficult, especially when they bring forward legislation like this. But they had it wrong in the pamphlets they handed out to us. They had it wrong in the pamphlets they handed out to the media. They had it wrong – you're not going to believe it, Mr. Speaker – on the website. They had it wrong, a miscommunication. Four different places they had a miscommunication. It sounds like a misrepresentation to me. It wasn't wrong. It's just that they saw the pressure, and they backed up and they changed it.

The pressure is still there, Mr. Speaker, but the biggest issue here is not about the pressure. The biggest issue is that they had it wrong once, so how do they know that they've got it right this time? Slow down. Let's listen to Albertans. Let's have the opportunity to bring in Albertans, farmers and ranchers, agricultural groups, experts in the field, and let's hear how they're going to be affected. Let's do up a 107-page document after listening to a committee, listening to experts, and having an opportunity for the Wildrose to present our dissenting opinion or our agreement so we can have the legislation go through. Let's have the opportunity for the third party to come forward with some recommendations. They'll have a couple, I'm sure.

**Mr. Rodney:** I have one right here.

**Mr. Jean:** In fact, they have one right there.

Even the fourth and fifth parties: we could have them come in with some recommendations. But, Mr. Speaker, the more important recommendations than all of those would be the recommendations of farmers and ranchers, who actually deal with this every day.

Why would you do this? Why would you ignore farmers and ranchers? Why would you treat them like second-class citizens? You're prepared to consult with the municipal governments across this province. By the way, if you're prepared to consult with them – guess what? – the AAMDC said: don't go ahead with this bill. They said: stop; don't do it. You're prepared to talk to them about the Municipal Government Act when it comes up and to consult with them and get it right, but now they're saying to you, "Don't go ahead with this bill," and you're still pushing ahead like there's no tomorrow, making us sit until 1:30 in the morning, 14 or 15 hours a day. We're prepared to do that. We don't have a problem with that.

But, Mr. Speaker, the referral motion . . .

**The Speaker:** Point of order by the Government House Leader.

#### **Point of Order Factual Accuracy**

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I would not normally raise this, but it's about the third time I've heard the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition talk about going to 1:30 in the morning. In actual fact, because of Wildrose delaying tactics and failures to keep commitments that had been made in the House with respect to the timing of Bill 4, we were here last night debating Bill 4, not because we were debating Bill 6, as the Official Opposition leader is suggesting. He is not being accurate in his characterization of the debate that took place.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, do you have a response to the point of order?

**11:30**

**Mr. Jean:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. He doesn't have a point of order. He's wrong.

But I can carry on with my speech if you like.

**The Speaker:** Do you have any additional information with respect to the point of order?

**Mr. Jean:** Yes. I would submit that he's wrong, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** That's the extent of it?

**Mr. Jean:** I don't see any point of order. It's called argument.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Government House Leader, is there a specific citation that you would refer to in your point of order?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I would suggest 23(i), imputing false or unavowed motives to another member. He's suggesting that we have kept – that the House was up debating Bill 6 till 1:30 in the morning. Nothing could be further from the truth. It's just simply not true.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, that is noted.

I would ask that the Official Opposition leader avoid touching on that issue. Let's respect the continuation of the discussion, if you wouldn't mind. Please proceed.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I apologize that we were here until 1:30 in the morning debating this and other bills because they don't want to face Albertans and consult properly, with this referral motion. I totally apologize for that.

Speaking of consulting, let's talk about what consulting is, Mr. Speaker. If we look at the early 15th-century definition of consulting – I tried to bring a dictionary in, and they said it might be a prop – it's to deliberate, consider, to call together, and to gather, to ask for advice. Now, they haven't done any consultations. That's not consulting, what they've done. They've gone to meetings, and they've told people what is going to happen. That's not consultation.

I want to talk about another definition here that I looked up as well, which is "ineffective consultation." Those are considered to be cosmetic consultations. This is a cosmetic government, so cosmetic governments do cosmetic consultations, that were done due to an obligation for show and not for true participatory decision-making.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think farmers and ranchers deserve to be consulted. If they were consulted properly, I think what they would choose is to have this bill divided into four different bills. The reason they would want that is because it is so dramatic so far as changes. While we're sitting in here debating bills until 1:30 in the morning and while this government is pushing through those bills without any proper consultation, we've actually been thinking about it and consulting with farmers in town halls right across this province, and they've told us clearly that we should break this bill up into four different parts.

The first part is employment standards and the employment standards changes that are being proposed by the government. Mr. Speaker, you know that there are many, many issues with employment standards in this province that are very complicated. I know that because I've owned and operated over 15 businesses in this province, and I've had hundreds of employees. It's very difficult, it's very complicated, and oftentimes you need a lawyer to be able to interpret this, which is not the way I would like to see it. I would like to see it be in simple language so that people can understand simple concepts, that make sense to everybody, so that anybody reading those documents would understand the full consequences of those documents. If you look on the website of employment standards – and I invite Albertans to do so right after they call their NDP MLA or any NDP MLA from Edmonton or wherever they like – you would have an opportunity to see how complicated those changes are in employment standards and how difficult they would be, especially this one, where it actually changes the employment standards.

The next part, Mr. Speaker, after employment standards changes, that I would bring forward to consult on properly would be the labour relations changes. Of course, this should be done in a separate bill as well so that we could hear those experts. We could have employment standards experts listening to one committee and bringing forward suggestions for that committee and those laws, which, obviously, will change farms and ranches but for employment purposes and employee purposes, and then we would have another that would deal with the labour relations changes. Maybe that would be the proper time, in my humble opinion, to actually do the consultations that this government has already done with the Alberta Federation of Labour and the unions that they've already consulted with. It was surprising how fast the unions got onboard. In fact, I think it was within minutes that they came out with their own press release talking about how great the

government was with this piece of legislation. The only people they consulted with, Mr. Speaker, were unions. Are we surprised?

This would be the right place to consult with unions, Mr. Speaker, all unions that are affected by this, not just one union that might be applauding the NDP position and the NDP government – all unions that are affected by this – just like all Alberta farmers and ranchers should be consulted at the appropriate time based upon how it affects them and, even more so, the agriculture industry associations, that have clearly indicated to this government that this bill sucks and should be stopped. They're not even listening to them.

Occupational health and safety changes would be the third bill that it should be separated into, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that we get that right, because it's very difficult. You know, some of the rules that apply to my brother, who's a scaffolder, a member of the carpenters' union for 35, 36 years in Fort McMurray – different rules apply to him on a Syncrude site or a Suncor site than should apply to a farmer because it's a unique environment and it's a much different environment.

You know what? The government might say that they're going to get it right, but the truth is that they're not going to get it right because they've already admitted that they got it wrong. How can you be right this time if you were wrong last time? Last time, by the way, was just a couple of days ago. You wrote out some amendments on the back of a napkin and submitted them, and you said that it was right then, three days ago, and now it's right again.

Then, finally, Mr. Speaker – and I know you're aware of this – the fourth piece of legislation would of course be workers' compensation changes. I did have an opportunity to represent people that were on workers' compensation. I will tell you that I have heard nothing but bad stories from people on workers' compensation. When they're exclusively only allowed to be covered by one piece of legislation and one insurance, it doesn't work out well. That's why farmers want choice.

It's been heard by Wildrose MLAs on this side that farmers already make a choice to have better insurance to cover their employees and their families because most times the employees are their friends or families or people they have long-term relationships with. I'm not talking about, you know, three and a half years like these people have left here. I'm talking, like, 10, 20 years of relationships where one person or one family works with that other family that owns a farm. They want to protect them. That's why most farmers already have better insurance than WCB.

If you look at how WCB covers Albertans on the job site, it is not sufficient. It is not a good piece of legislation. I know that the people that have been here before, the four members of the NDP caucus that have been here before, all know – all know – that the number one complaint they have is about WCB. Or it should be because it's the number one complaint I used to get. It's a big complaint. WCB does not work correctly. Now you're going to impose it on 43,000 family farms, and it's not working right. There are so many different options, and that's the best option you can come up with, to impose a broken system on 43,000 farm and ranch families.

Let's go back to the drawing board. Let's listen to the people that are outside this place and are saying: "Stop. Slow down. Please pay attention." You've heard it. I can tell that you've heard it because I can see it. You're worried, and you should be because you're not listening to the people. And when governments don't listen to the people, governments get tossed aside.

If we did have the opportunity to consult properly on the details of the bill and if we did divide the bill into four separate parts, four separate pieces of legislation, you could then have the opportunity to share those four sets of proposed legislation and regulations with



farmers and ranchers, with farm and ranch groups, with agricultural groups, with the people, the organizations that have been doing this for a long, long time. A long time. They have a lot of history. They know what they're doing. They just want the opportunity to tell this government how they can do it better. That would be actual consultation. That would be actually listening to them, taking six months, having an opportunity for them to hear you and then for them to be heard by you. That's what communication is called because that's what communication is.

11:40

Then we would come back with four good pieces of legislation, probably four good pieces of legislation, that Wildrose MLAs on this side could support. Wouldn't it be great to go to the people of Alberta with a bill that's supported by the Official Opposition, a bill that's had full opportunity to be vetted by farmers and ranchers across the province and by agricultural groups, and to have them come before a committee, that this referral motion deals with, to be heard, to be listened to, to be consulted, to hear their stories, and to make it better? I think we can do that. Then we can go through the three readings, have the opportunity to vote, and maybe – maybe – just listen to the Wildrose opposition as we propose some good amendments, that reflect what the farmers and ranchers are telling us. That seems to make a lot of sense to me.

I especially found, during the period of time I was a parliamentary secretary in Ottawa, that I had about 25 bills that came before my committee. Now, Mr. Speaker, some of those bills – I made a list. I know you're surprised at that, but I brought a list, a couple of other documents here that I want to go over. One of those was strengthening aviation security. That was Bill C-42. My job as a parliamentary secretary was to take the government's position to a committee, in a minority government, mind you – this is a little different because it's a majority – and try to convince the NDP, who, of course, had a federal presence of two members in those days; the Bloc Québécois, who, of course, are the separatist party and had three members at that time; and the Liberals, who were down to two, I believe. I had to convince at least two members from another party that this was a good bill, or we had to come forward with amendments that they would agree to, or they would come forward with amendments, and we would listen to those amendments.

We would have counsel there, a lawyer there from the government, that was supposed to be impartial, and frankly they were impartial. They do good work. They would tell us what they thought of those amendments, those proposed by the NDP and even by the separatist party. And do you know what? We were able to pass more bills through that particular committee than had ever been done by any Liberal government in the past. Two a year, I think, was our average. Most Liberal governments get about one every two years, I'm told. But two a year, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, whether it was the Strengthening Aviation Security Act, whether it was the Motor Vehicle Safety Act – remember all those recalls with Toyota and other brake recalls and floor mat recalls? That was part of our portfolio as well.

The Marine Liability Act, which dealt with a lot of different things, Mr. Speaker, mostly pollution and strengthening the environmental provisions on a federal basis to make sure that people who polluted actually paid.

The Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act: Mr. Speaker, you must know that things that happen in the Arctic are much more serious than things that happen, environmental spills that happen anywhere else because they stay forever, almost, and that's why the Conservative government brought forward some very hard legislation on that.

The Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, Mr. Speaker, which was a very important act, of course, because there are a lot of dangerous goods that travel through our country on roads, rail, otherwise.

Even, Mr. Speaker, the Canada Transportation Act, Railway Safety Act, and the railway shippers' rights act: I was very proud to be part of that, where the federal government brought in legislative changes to make it easier for farmers to ship their product, to make sure that CN and CP actually listened to the farmers and were prepared to provide to the farmers what they needed. That was a good bill. I don't think it went far enough to protect farmers and to make available what they need as far as rail to get their product to market, but we went through that process.

We went through it with the Canadian Transportation Act and Canada's Clean Air Act and even the International Bridges and Tunnels Act, Mr. Speaker, that deals with bridges and tunnels between the United States and ourselves. There was no legislation in place before that. It took a Conservative government, after 100 years, 200 years, to bring that into place.

Mr. Speaker, the important part in all these acts and probably about 10 or 15 others, including – you're not going to believe this – budgets, is that they consulted. They consulted with experts. We had prebudget consultations. You know, we went across the country often and certainly across places in Ontario and eastern Canada, including Newfoundland and Labrador, and even different parts of Canada in the west, where there was an economy that wasn't doing very well, and we heard from people how we could do it better, how we could make it better. We did weeks and weeks of consultations before every single budget. We heard from experts in Ontario, we heard from experts right across, and we heard from stakeholders.

Even the manufacturers' association of Canada came forward and gave us really good evidence. You know what they told us, Mr. Speaker? It's funny. He was the president of the manufacturers' association of Canada, and he had a forklift operation company in Ontario. He told us, the Finance committee – I think it was two years ago now; 2012 I think it was – that he would be out of business if it wasn't for the oil sands. I was surprised. He would be out of business if it wasn't for the oil sands. All he did was manufacture forklifts. I was, like: how in the world? Like, oil sands companies use forklifts. I know that they do for the purchasing and different things. He said that over 50 per cent of his forklifts went to the oil sands from Ontario. That's why this country is in a big economic problem right now, because the NDP are not doing the right things relating to our economy, but of course that doesn't have to do with the referral motion. It has to do with the evidence that would be heard on a referral motion if we were successful and got it to committee.

Mr. Speaker, on all of these acts, every single one of them, we listened to the opposition NDP; the Bloc, the separatists. I know you'd find that surprising because I'm a nationalist. I love Canada, and I'm here to stay with Canada. But I was prepared to listen to the Bloc and to have our members listen to the Bloc and to find better legislation because it's not about their ideological views on how the government should work. It's not about their view on how greenhouse gas emissions should be suppressed and we should go back and live in caves and have fires and things like that, how we should stop using oil. It's not about that stuff. It's about listening. It's about consulting. It's about making sure that the people that we work for actually have a say.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? Every person in this place, every person, even down there, except for the staff, of course, was elected by people. That's right. I was even elected by people. I was elected by the people of Fort McMurray-Conklin, and I'm very proud of

the fact that today I'm standing in this place, representing their views. What they want is a government that listens.

If it was just one particular case, where they would bring forward a piece of legislation and then two days later they would bring forward more amendments than the legislation was and try to change the legislation – but it's every single bill they brought forward, I think, except for one. They've brought forward amendments after they've introduced it. Like, seriously, Mr. Speaker. They brought forward amendments days after they've introduced bills that they say are perfect. Is that a government that's ready to govern? No, it's not. In fact, it's so bad that even the amendments they bring forward – they never consulted with farmers or ranchers on the amendments. They didn't, just like they didn't properly consult with school boards across this province. That's why every single school board that I've talked to is opposed to Bill 8.

The referral motion, Mr. Speaker: consulting with Albertans, making sure that things go to committees so Albertans have the opportunity to participate in democracy, to participate in their lives. Now, farmers don't get mad very often. You know that. You're from Medicine Hat. They're great people. They're solid people, and very seldom do they voice their discontent. Look at the news. You know, the NDP are famous for running around with placards that say, "Stop the tar sands," and things like that. It's not very often that they get picketed, especially not by farmers and ranchers, but they are. You've seen it outside. I've seen it outside. They just want to have the opportunity to be listened to, to participate in what they have here, which is 87 people that work for the people of Alberta, but the NDP, the government, the Premier don't listen to that, don't seem to understand that.

Now, I do understand that they want to be ideological in their view and in their policies and their implementation of those policies, but what I'm saying to them here today is that there is an opportunity to take this back to the people of Alberta by agreeing to this referral motion and properly setting aside time and a committee to consult and to make sure that Albertans have the opportunity to be listened to. That's what they want, Mr. Speaker. That's what we want here. We want a better bill. We don't want to have a situation where people are caught in a scenario that is not good for them and that shuts down a family farm or shuts down a lot of family farms.

**11:50**

Right now there is so much pressure economically on the people of Alberta, not just in the oil sector but in the farm sector. You know why, Mr. Speaker? You know why? Because most of these farmers operate equipment on the farm, and then they go, on their days off that they can, during the winter or different times when they don't have to seed or harvest or brand or calve, and work in the oil patch. I got a letter from a young lady yesterday that said that she had four sons, and when they're not working on the farm, they go work in the oil patch. Well, right now they're all not working in the oil patch.

So how many times can this NDP kick Albertans when they're down? This is the same issue, Mr. Speaker. We've had our number one sector, the oil sector – wow. What this government has done to our oil sector. I mean, sure, there are some low oil prices, but pretty much the average price of oil in Alberta from 1997 to 2008 was about 40 bucks. That was the average price, give or take. The average price right now for this year is over 40 bucks. Now we're down to \$37, but it's better than it was for that 10-year period before, yet we prospered.

In fact, Ralph Klein, a previous Premier, from 1993 to 2004 brought \$80 billion in financial capital, \$80 billion worth of private

capital, into this province to invest in oil sands, to invest in manufacturing, to invest in science and technology, to invest in Alberta. During that same period of time do you know that both Ontario and Quebec had less private capital invested there? Now, Mr. Speaker, we had a thriving economy at the end of that era. It started to really pick up and do really wonderful things. The economy got better, but it got better as a result of a series of things. Yes, even Jean Chrétien brought in a good piece of legislation, capital cost allowance depreciation. That encouraged some work in the oil sands.

Stephen Harper brought in some more things. He lowered taxes. In fact, he lowered taxes to the lowest place they've been since the '50s. Lowered taxes. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I think that by the time Stephen Harper was done being Prime Minister, there were 10 or 12 additional tax-freedom days. That means that Albertans didn't have to pay taxes for those additional 11 days. Instead of paying taxes for those days, they got the taxes in their pocket. They got to decide where they wanted to spend the money instead of the government telling them where they were going to spend money, just like here.

Mr. Speaker, the government is telling farmers and ranchers what is going to be in the legislation: no choice; this is the way it is, lump it or like it. Well, they don't like it. They don't want it, but whether they want it or not, this government has the opportunity and the right to bring in legislation, to force it down their throats. Now they're trying to say: well, you know, it's cough syrup; just throw it back and deal with it, and you'll be okay in the morning. Well, in three and a half mornings from now I think they're going to find that the NDP is not going to be around to see what the doctor is ordering next, and that's because they're not listening.

Oh, excellent. I just got past tab A, Mr. Speaker, and I've only got 43 tabs left. Tab B goes into the specifics of the bill.

**Mr. Mason:** There aren't that many minutes.

**Mr. Jean:** I'm sure that I will get unanimous consent to keep going as long as I want, Mr. Speaker. I know that the House leader loves it.

You know, this is actually a small bill, as I've said, only five pages, now six pages of amendments, of course, because the bill was imperfect. Think about that in the back there. Think about that, Mr. Speaker. I want them in the back to understand this, the people that were actually elected by the people of Alberta, that are supposed to represent the people of Alberta, that there are just five pages of a bill and six pages of amendments, which means that the people who are telling you what to do got it wrong. How can you now trust that they got it right? Farmers and ranchers across Alberta don't believe that you got it right, and they're going to keep expressing their opinions. What we want to do is make sure that farmers and ranchers are listened to and that they have an opportunity to participate in this bill.

Even though it's just five pages of original material, it is a short amendment of the Employment Standards Code. It repeals a few sections. It repeals one section in the Labour Relations Code. It even repeals a section of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and changes regulations to that act, and I mentioned already – I know you heard it, but I'm going to say it again. Those regulations, that actually are the details of this bill, they can change at any time they want, and they don't have to tell me. They don't even have to tell you, Mr. Speaker. Can you believe that? That's not democracy, is it? When they don't have to tell anybody what they're doing – they can just do it – that's not democracy.

That's not a government that's listening. That's a government that's doing whatever it wants because they believe they have a

mandate to do whatever they want. They don't. The people of Alberta, through driving in convoys, through coming to the Legislature steps – by the way, I think that there's going to be another rally on Thursday and another one on Tuesday to tell this government what they think. Well, those people don't believe they've got it right, and they want to be listened to, but they can't because this government has closed ears. They're not paying attention. They think that they can just storm through this and everybody is just going to say that it was cough syrup.

Well, that's not the way a government should operate. That's not the way a Premier should act. A Premier is supposed to give people hope during bad times, be a ray of sunshine. [laughter] I know you're laughing because I'm Mr. Sunshine and I'm always smiling. I can't help it, Mr. Speaker; I love representing the people of Alberta. They should try it. I really do. It's the greatest honour of my life to be here. You know why I love being here? It's because I feel that I'm actually here representing the people.

I encourage the backbenchers on the other side, the NDP backbenchers, to represent the people that elected them, not me, not the people here, but the people that elected them. You know what? They even have the opportunity in their budget, Mr. Speaker, to consult with the people that elected them. They could have town halls like the six that we had this last weekend. They could listen to the people. You know what the surprising part about democracy is? If you listen and you act in their best interests, they're happy with

you and they re-elect you. Guess what happens when they're not happy with you? They hold rallies, they set up convoys; 16,000 people participate in a telephone town hall – I've never had that ever before; I've never had more than 4,000 in 11 years – 16,000, and we only dialed the NDP ridings, only the rural ones. A hundred thousand Albertans in your ridings, and 16,000 of them showed up mad. That should tell you something.

Mr. Speaker, there are a few other things that it changes as well, but all I know is this: as a business owner in this province for a long time, a second-generation business owner, the best thing that they can do is to slow down, to talk to Albertans, to talk to the people whose lives are so affected by this, the mums and dads who every day go out there and farm and provide food for our tables, good, quality food. We have the best reputation in the world for our farmers and ranchers, the best. Nobody comes close to us as far as reputation on quality of health.

I don't know if you even know this, Mr. Speaker, but do you know that we are the fifth-largest honey producer in the world and we have the number one honey quality in the world here in Alberta? Something to be proud of.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, you have, I believe, some time left, but the Assembly stands adjourned.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.]







**Table of Contents**

Prayers ..... 937

Orders of the Day ..... 937

Government Bills and Orders

    Second Reading

        Bill 6   Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act ..... 937

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